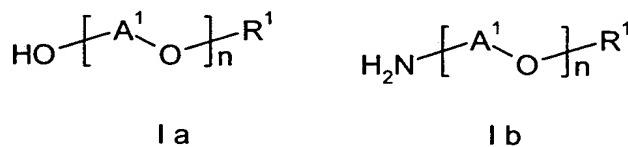


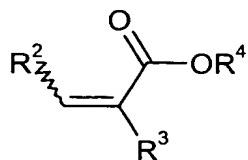
We claim:-

1. A process for the production of leather, wherein pelts, pickled pelts or semifinished products are treated with at least one polymer which is obtainable by copolymerization of
- 5 at least one ethylenically unsaturated dicarboxylic anhydride (A), derived from at least one dicarboxylic acid of 4 to 8 carbon atoms,
- at least one vinylaromatic compound (B)
- and optionally at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer (C) differing from
- 10 (A) and having at least one hetero atom, reaction with at least one compound (D) of the formula I a or I b

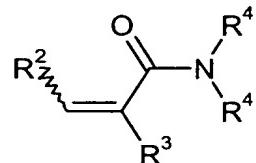


- 15 at least 0.55 equivalent, based on (A), of (D) being used,
- and optionally hydrolysis with water or aqueous alkaline solution,
- in formulae I a and I b the variables being defined as follows:
- 20 A^1 are identical or different and are $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_6$ -alkylene
- R^1 is linear or branched $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkyl and
- n is an integer from 6 to 200.
- 25 2. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the polymer is treated with water or aqueous alkaline solution before use.
 3. A process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein (B) is styrene.
 - 30 4. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the molar ratio of (A) to (C) is from 1:0 to 1:10.
 5. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the molar ratio of (A) to [(B) + (C)] is from 2:1 to 1:20.

35 6. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 5, wherein (C) is selected from ethylenically unsaturated $\text{C}_3\text{-C}_8$ -carboxylic acid derivatives of the formula II

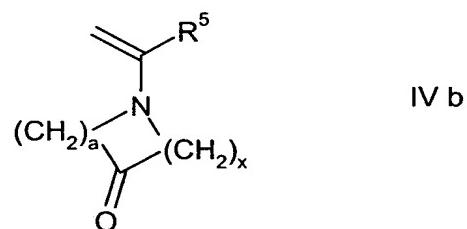
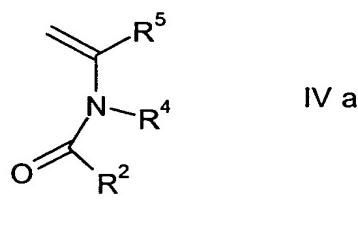


acrylamides of the formula III



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acyclic amides of the formula IV a or cyclic amides of the formula IV b



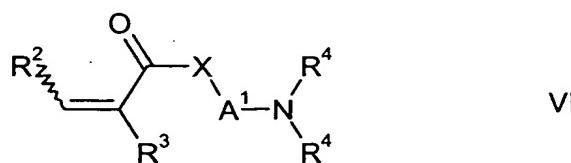
10

C₁-C₂₀-alkyl vinyl ethers, N-vinyl derivatives of nitrogen-containing aromatic compounds, α,β-unsaturated nitriles, alkoxylated unsaturated ethers of the formula V

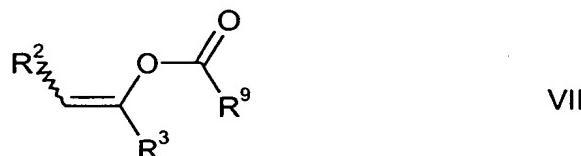


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esters or amides of the formula VI



unsaturated esters of the formula VII



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in the formulae the variables being defined as follows:

- R² and R³ are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen and straight-chain and branched C₁-C₁₀-alkyl,
 - 10 R⁴ are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen and branched and straight-chain C₁-C₂₂-alkyl,
 - R⁵ is hydrogen or methyl,
 - x is an integer from 2 to 6,
 - y is an integer selected from 0 and 1,
 - 15 a is an integer from 0 to 6,
 - R⁶ and R⁷ are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen and straight-chain and branched C₁-C₁₀-alkyl,
 - X is oxygen or N-R⁴
 - R⁸ is [A¹-O]_n-R⁴,
 - 20 R⁹ are identical or different and are selected from hydrogen and straight-chain and branched C₁-C₁₀-alkyl
- and the remaining variables are as defined above.

- 7. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 6, wherein the hydrolysis is carried out at from 15 to 100°C.
- 25 8. A process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 7, wherein the polymers are metered as an aqueous dispersion or solution.
- 30 9. A leather produced by a process as claimed in any of claims 1 to 8.

10. The use of a leather as claimed in claim 9 for the production of articles of clothing or furniture or automotive parts.

11. An article of clothing, produced from or comprising leather as claimed in claim 9.

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12. A piece of furniture produced from or comprising leather as claimed in claim 9.

13. An automotive part produced from or comprising leather as claimed in claim 9.